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Through the NSC Alliance partnership with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, we are pleased to provide NSC Alliance members with the following public policy update. With proper attribution to NSC Alliance, all material from these reports may be reproduced or forwarded. We encourage you to share this report with colleagues at your institution. Anyone interested in receiving copies of the NSC Alliance Washington Report may subscribe at [www.NSCAlliance.org](http://www.NSCAlliance.org) -- it's free!

If you have any questions or require additional information regarding any of the following items, please contact NSC Alliance director of public policy Dr. Robert Gropp at 202-628-1500 x 250 or at [rgropp@aibs.org](mailto:rgropp@aibs.org).

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### **2018 Science Funding Advances Through Congress**

A number of funding bills advanced through the House and Senate Appropriations Committees before the August congressional recess. When lawmakers return from their summer break, there will be less than a month left in fiscal year (FY) 2018.

House appropriators plan to cut \$5 billion from non-defense programs in 2018 and to continue those cuts in future years. If implemented, the draft spending plan would result in a 44 percent reduction to non-defense spending by 2027 once inflation is accounted for. Conversely, Senate appropriators opted to assume flat funding relative to FY 2017. President Trump had sought a \$54 billion cut to non-defense programs.

#### *Agriculture*

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees both recommended \$375 million for competitive research grants in the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative. This is the same level as FY 2017 and \$26 million more than the President's budget request.

Intramural agricultural research and facilities would be cut by 6 or 7 percent under the House and Senate bills, respectively. These are significant cuts but less damaging than the 20 percent cut sought by President Trump.

### *Commerce, Justice, and Science*

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees passed bills that would fund the Departments of Commerce and Justice, as well as some independent agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF).

NSF is facing cuts in both chambers' bills. The House proposed cutting \$131 million from Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction and \$2 million from NSF operations. Research and education funding would remain at FY 2017 levels. An amendment offered by Representative David Price (D-NC) to boost NSF funding by \$604 million was voted down.

The Senate panel approved a bill that would fund NSF at \$7.3 billion, a cut of \$161 million below the current funding level. Unlike the House bill, the Senate opted to cut funding for research and science education to pay for the acquisition of three new oceanic research vessels.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration would also have reduced funding. The House panel approved a cut of \$710 million from the FY 2017 enacted level, as compared to the \$85 million reduction in the Senate legislation. Climate research would be cut by 19 percent in the House bill. Representative Matt Cartwright (D-PA) offered an amendment to restore the \$30 million cut, but the committee rejected it.

Subcommittee chair John Culberson (R-TX) said that Congress would have to pass a broad, far-reaching budget deal if lawmakers wanted any hope to boost funding for NSF or other programs.

Prior to adoption, Senator Shaheen (D-NH) offered an amendment to increase the total allocation for the Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill by \$6.5 billion if there is a bipartisan budget amendment. The amendment would have provided a \$538 million increase for NSF. Shaheen's amendment failed by a vote of 15-16.

"The cut for NSF included in the bill does not reflect a lack of support for science, I want to make that clear," Senator Shaheen said. "But it's a reality of our constrained budget caps and is another signal that we need a new budget deal to address the destructive cuts due to sequestration."

### *Energy and Water Development*

Both chambers have advanced legislation to fund the Department of Energy. The department's Office of Science could receive a \$158 million increase in the Senate bill. This would include a \$21 million increase for the Biological and Environmental Research program. The House of Representatives approved flat funding for the Office of Science and would cut \$30 million from biological and environmental research.

Another area where the chambers differed significantly was for the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E). The House complied with the White House's request to eliminate the \$300 million program. Conversely, the Senate would provide an additional \$24 million for ARPA-E, which is "record levels of funding," according to subcommittee chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN).

### *Interior and Environment*

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is facing more than \$500 million in cuts in legislation advancing in the House of Representatives. The \$7.5 billion proposed by House appropriators, however, is significantly more than the \$5.6 billion proposed by President Trump. The bill would maintain funding levels for restoration efforts in the Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes; the White House sought to eliminate both programs.

Within the Department of the Interior, the U.S. Geological Survey would receive \$1 billion, a \$46 million cut; the Ecosystems mission area is facing a 4 percent cut. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is facing a \$38 million cut, but science support would be flat funded.

Funding for the Forest and Rangeland Research within the U.S. Forest Service would be cut by \$10 million to \$278 million.

The Senate Interior appropriations bill has not yet been released.

### *Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education*

The National Institutes of Health could receive a \$1.1 billion increase if legislation passed by the House Appropriations Committee were enacted. This is \$8.6 billion more than the President's budget request. Several Obama-era initiatives would receive large increases, including the Cancer Moonshot, precision medicine, and the BRAIN initiative.

The measure also stipulates that the agency continue reimbursing grantee research institutions for indirect costs due to facilities and administrative costs. The Trump Administration had proposed capping such costs at 10 percent of each grant.

No legislation has been released yet by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

### **Museums Write to Congress about Funding**

Nearly 950 museum organizations signed a letter to Congress about the need for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The agency was proposed for elimination in President Trump's 2018 budget request.

NSC Alliance was among the signatories, as were several NSC Alliance member organizations.

“While we acknowledge the many pressing priorities in the budget, the tremendous economic and educational contributions of museums make them eminently worthy of federal funding,” states the letter. “As you make decisions about the Fiscal Year 2018 budget, we urge you to support agencies and programs that help museums make a difference in their communities.”

[Read the letter.](#)

### **iDigBio Now Has 100+ Million Specimens**

iDigBio is now the largest virtual collection of natural history specimens in the world. The National Science Foundation-sponsored initiative surged past 100 million digitized records in July 2017.

“What’s exciting about being at more than 100 million specimen records is you can ask larger questions over space, time and biodiversity. Big data sheds light not just on one species but whole blocks of species — aquatic and terrestrial,” said Larry Page, director of iDigBio. “The more data we have, the better we’ll be able to predict the impacts of climate change, human disease, landscape modifications and changes that will impact crops.”

Page is a past president of the Natural Science Collections Alliance.

The project is based at the University of Florida with the Florida Museum of Natural History and Florida State University as core partners. iDigBio has amassed data from more than 1,900 collections from about 820 institutions in its online portal.

Learn more at <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/science/museum-digitization-program-idigbio-rockets-past-100-million-specimen-records/>.

### **Fire at Vermont Herbarium**

A fire at a historic building at the University of Vermont threatened the natural history collections in the Pringle Herbarium. Initial assessments, however, indicate that the collection was not harmed.

The herbarium holds the state’s largest flora collection—more than 300,000 specimens. The specimens date back to 1810.

The building also houses the university’s insect and mammal collections. The university said in a statement that the animal collections appear to be undamaged.

The blaze was likely caused by construction workers who were soldering copper. Although the fire was contained to the upper parts of the building, water damage occurred throughout the building.

The university has moved the collections and plans to restore the building.

### **Bicameral Bill Would Create a U.S. Science Laureate**

Legislation has been introduced to create a Science Laureate of the United States. The bills are sponsored by Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) and Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI). The new position would promote greater appreciation for science among the public and was inspired by the Poet Laureate position.

“Scientists like Albert Einstein, Jane Goodall, or Sally Ride can capture the public’s attention and inspire Americans,” said Representative Lofgren. “Establishing a Science Laureate will provide a platform for more scientists to inspire us. Science and technology is ever more important to the United States’ competitive edge in the modern world. A Science Laureate can elevate, articulate, and promote science to the broader public, as well as be a role model for students by encouraging and inspiring them to be the innovators of tomorrow.”

The legislation would direct the National Science Foundation to appoint a science laureate for a one-year term. The appointment would be made from a list of finalists recommended by the National Academy of Sciences.

### **Ideas Sought for Food and Agriculture Research**

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine is launching a new study on “Science Breakthroughs 2030: A Strategy for Food and Agriculture Research.” The study aims to identify the next big research directions for food and agricultural sciences.

The committee is actively seeking the input of life, physical, and social scientists, including disciplines that may not be traditionally applied to food and agriculture research. Research ideas can be submitted online at <https://ideabuzz.com/a/buzz/nasem/science-breakthroughs-2030>.

### **Expand Your Broader Impact Skills: AIBS Communications Boot Camp for Scientists**

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is pleased to offer the following special opportunity for its members. NSC Alliance members will receive a discount on registration for an upcoming science communications workshop organized by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS).

AIBS is offering a professional development program designed to enhance the communication skills of scientists, particularly those interested in communicating with decision-makers and the news media. The program is an excellent way to develop new communication skills and identify effective methods for broadening the impact of research and education programs.

The AIBS Communications Training Boot Camp for Scientists expands on AIBS' highly successful media and science policy training workshops. The Boot Camp meets the needs of everyone from graduate students to senior researchers and program administrators to newly elected professional society leaders.

The Boot Camp is an intensive, two-day, hands-on training program that will be held in Washington, DC on 9-10 October 2017.

Participants will learn:

- How to translate scientific findings for non-technical audiences
- How to tell a resonant story that informs decision-makers
- How to prepare for and participate in a news interview
- How to prepare for and engage in a meeting with a decision-maker
- How to protect your scientific reputation
- How to identify and define the audience you need to reach
- What decision-makers want to hear from a scientist
- What reporters are looking for in an interview
- How to leverage social media
- How the nation's science policy is developed and implemented

Participants will also have the opportunity for formal and informal discussions with science policy and communications experts working in Washington, DC. A course outline is available [here](#).

Because of NSC Alliance's strategic partnership with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, individuals nominated to participate by an NSC Alliance member institution save \$55 on the registration rate.

Learn more about the program and register now at [https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/communications\\_boot\\_camp.html](https://www.aibs.org/public-policy/communications_boot_camp.html).

### **Enter the 2017 Faces of Biology Photo Contest**

Enter the Faces of Biology Photo Contest for your chance to win \$250 and to have your photo appear on the cover of the journal *BioScience*.

The competition, sponsored by the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), recognizes scientists who use imagery to communicate aspects of biological research to the public and policymakers.

The theme of the contest is "Faces of Biology." Photographs entered into the competition must depict a person, such as a scientist, technician, or student, engaging in biological research. The research may occur outside, in a lab, at a natural history collection, at a field station, on a computer, in a classroom, or anywhere else research is done.

The First Place Winner will have his/her winning photo featured on the cover of *BioScience*, and will receive \$250 and a one year membership in AIBS, including a subscription to *BioScience*. The Second and Third Place Winners will have his/her winning photo printed inside the journal, and will receive a one year membership in AIBS, including a subscription to *BioScience*.

The winning photo from the 2016 contest was featured on the cover of the April 2017 issue of *BioScience*.

Submissions must be received by 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on 1 October 2017.

For more information or to enter the contest, visit <http://www.aibs.org/public-programs/photocontest.html>.

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The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit association that serves as an advocate for natural science collections, the institutions that preserve them, and the research and education that extend from them for the benefit of science, society, and stewardship of the environment. NSC Alliance members are part of an international community of museums, botanical gardens, herbariums, universities, and other institutions that house natural science collections and utilize them in research, exhibitions, academic and informal science education, and outreach activities. Website: [www.NSCAlliance.org](http://www.NSCAlliance.org).

The NSC Alliance Washington Report is a publication of the NSC Alliance. For information about membership in the NSC Alliance, please contact [spotter@aibs.org](mailto:spotter@aibs.org).